

---

## Chapter 7

---

### Meeting Students' Social/Emotional Needs Through Program Options

---

While academic programming is extremely important for high-ability students, support for the social and emotional aspects of maturing may be even more critical. Research shows that bright children need help understanding their feelings and developing their self-concept. They need to:

- Know how they are similar to and different from other people,
- Feel pride in their abilities, rather than guilt or anxiety,
- Learn how to value and accept people less able than themselves,
- Own their own talents and determine how they best fit into the world, and
- Belong to a group, and to the school community.

—Schmitz, Connie C. and Judy Galbraith, Managing the Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted, Free Spirit Press, 1985.

Discussion of these topics may be in a small group of high-ability students or with an adult. Both should be led by someone trained in the interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of giftedness.

Discussions and experiences should evolve around the following topics:

#### ✓ Extra Perception

The ability to have a deeper understanding and more acute awareness of physical, social and intrapersonal aspects of life.

#### ✓ High Involvement

Because of increased sensitivity to thoughts, actions, interests and materials, there is often a frustration with those who do not exhibit the same characteristics.

*We should take care  
not to make the  
intellect our god; it  
has, of course,  
powerful muscles, but  
no personality.  
—Albert Einstein*

*While academic programming is extremely important for high-ability students, support for the social and emotional aspects of maturing may be even more critical.*

### ✓ Emotional Sensitivity

Super-sensitivity caused by the high degree of perception may lead to problems. James Alvino comments that they display “high standards of truth and morality . . . and are quick to judge those who don’t measure up. They’re affronted by hypocrisy, double standards, and other forms of logical and ethical contradiction.”

### ✓ Perfectionism

While concerned with accomplishment and the pursuit of excellence, oftentimes high-ability students are unable to accept a product of “high quality” because it is not perfect. Students need to develop criteria for their work and use that criteria for judging their accomplishments.

### ✓ Uneven Integration

Students may excel in mental math or story writing but do not have the ability to “get it down on paper.” This may be a real learning disability but probably can be attributed to the unevenness in the development of students’ abilities. Very few students are high in everything, and we must help them learn to cope with these differences.

For further exploration of cognitive and affective characteristics, see Growing Up Gifted, by A. Barbara Clark (second edition, pages 37-40; third edition, pages 126-132).

## Additional Concerns

### ✓ The Quality and Quantity of Giftedness

As we learn more about intelligence, we are able to define it in more appropriate ways. Howard Gardner has explored the “seven intelligences,” and we must understand and address the strengths in all of these intelligences.

We must also note the differences caused by the degree of the intelligence. A student with a very high IQ (above 150) is likely to feel more different than one with an IQ above 130.

### ✓ Gifted Girls, Ethnic Minorities, Learners with Disabilities and Rural Isolation

Each of these groups present particular problems which must be dealt with in order for the student to develop fully. These are societal problems and students need both to be aware of the problems and given alternatives in order to deal with them. We, as professionals in the field, must also make others aware and help to alleviate the conditions.

Resources are becoming available to help develop programs to meet the social and emotional needs of high-ability students. This is a critical part of any well-developed program.

**For more information on students' social/emotional needs:**

Delisle, James R., Gifted Kids Speak Out, Free Spirit Press, 1987

Galbraith, Judy, The Gifted Kids Survival Guide, Free Spirit Press, 1984

Kerr, Barbara, A Handbook for Counseling the Gifted and Talented, American Association for Counseling and Development, 1991

Schmitz, Connie C. and Judy Galbraith, Managing the Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted, Free Spirit Press, 1985

Webb, James T., Elizabeth a Meckstroth, and Stephanie S. Tolan, Guiding the Gifted Child, Ohio Psychology Publishing Company, 1982

*As we learn more about intelligence, we are able to define it in more appropriate ways. Howard Gardner has explored the "seven intelligences," and we must understand and address the strengths in all of these intelligences.*